

Going Down This Dark Road by HungryCookieMonster

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Summary: To be feared was something that was desired. A simple need in order to feed. But for those who have never felt fear themselves the feeling is absolutely paralyzing. For Mr. Smiles, who was once the one who hunted and invoked terror, now understands what it is like to be the hunted. To be the one who is feeling the sickening feeling of dread. To save her he must go on. He must live

Going Down This Dark Road

Mr. Smiles stared at the raging fire in front of him, watching as the car burned and metal melting away slowly as the flames consumed it. He frowned a little and shifted in his position on the muddy ground beneath him. The rain pouring from the dark sky above was cold and unwelcome against his head and coat, making him shiver ever so slightly and pray that the fire would last through the night. It was their only source of warmth in this desolate wooded area, and it was mere luck that Smiles was able to ignite the fire within the abandoned car in the first place. The young girl that lay in his arms curled up against him with a small whimper. This made the clown tighten his hold on her and furrowed his brows worriedly. It has been a very rough couple of days for the two of them; with the seasons changing and the weather making it harder and harder to travel. The rain never seemed to let up in the area in which they have been traveling, and Mr. Smiles was beginning to worry that the young girl would catch a cold. She couldn't afford to get sick in such a world.

The clown yawned and bowed his head as exhaustion began to claim him. They have been traveling non-stop for about a week now. It was beginning to take a toll on the tall clown. His time for hibernation had been nearly a month ago after the outbreak occurred. He and his companions that resided in the circus they had built to lure children and adults alike to feast upon were due to sleep at the end of the summer of 2018 for the many years ahead of them. But, just as the month of August grew closer and their stamina waning, everything began to fall apart around them. It had started with a single scream; a young woman letting out a sheer shriek of terror that broke through the night. Mr. Smiles had laughed and felt pride in his black heart as he imagined one of his circus mates tearing into someones flesh.

But that is not what had occurred...

Yes, the woman was having her flesh being ripped from her face, but it was not from one of the beings running the circus. A monster who was once a human male was eating the skin and meat from the unfortunate soul beneath him. More screams and cries echoed

through the circus as people began to try and flee from the horror. More monsters such as the one began to appear from the night, running from the woods that were surrounding the park that Mr. Smiles had built. They screeched and yelled as they buralled toward the poor people that were mere minutes ago enjoying the bright lights and shows that were being performed. The fear had smelt absolutely divine as it flowed through the air, but terror began to grip Smiles' very being as he watched these once human beasts tear through his audience. He didn't know what to do. He didn't know what things could possibly be. But one thing was for sure: he needed to get the others out of this Hell. He had jumped from his place on the pedestal he had been standing on to perform and ran to the back of the circus tent, hoping-praying-that his people would still be there. Having to push through the panicked people within the tent, he finally made it to his destination in a shaking and heaving mess. There was no sign of them.

Where could they have gone...?

Sheer panic began to take over his large form, making him lose all sense of control as he fled from the tent, and all he could think about was finding the others. Standing outside and looking around frantically, his breathing began to become rapid as he watched the terrible scene before him. It was even worse outside of the tent. People were being torn to shreds and those things were coming from every side. Luckily Smiles was hidden partially by the tent exit, but he knew that he was going to have to emerge in order to get to his colleges. He had to make a run for it. He had to keep an eye out and listen intently for any signs of them being out in this mess. Taking in a deep breath through his painted red nose the clown began to run. People were surrounding him from all angles and making it so very hard for the tall clown to push through. Many rammed into him in their attempt to flee, making him almost lose balance and fall into the grass covered earth below. One of those things-monsters-tried to attack him as he continued to run through the crowd, but an unfortunate soul ran right in its path, being grabbed and dragged down to the ground as their neck was torn open. Blood splattered onto Mr. Smiles' ringmaster uniform but he could care less. He had eaten so many children over his long life and was used to being covered in copious amounts of the scarlet liquid. Not even glancing at

the dead body beside him, he kept running in hopes that he would find the other clowns safe somewhere away from all of this.

But, sadly, that is not what he had found. He had made it to the far side of the circus, where all of their trailers were once the time had come to shut down for the night, and stopped dead in his tracks at the sight before him. His closest companion, Salune, laid motionless on the ground, her purple colored blood pooling around her in a large puddle. Her stomach had been torn completely open and her face was riddled with claw marks and bites. She definitely didn't go down without a fight, considering the blood on her hands and her torn clothes, but these things seemed nearly impossible for even them to kill. They were no longer human, after all, and they relied on the fear of others for strength. These things had no emotion at all. No pain or fear was given off of them. Poppy had been a very strong individual, and looking around, Smiles could see that she had actually taken out some of these demons, but she may have been surrounded by too many to take them all down on her own. If only he had been there to help his friend.

If only he had been fast enough to get to her...

He ran over to her with tears beginning to form in his light blue eyes, kneeling before her and lifting her ever so slightly into his arms. Staring down at her face, tears of despair running down his pale cheeks, he let out a pained moan and bent over her. His shoulders were shaking as he began to cry softly against her bloodied chest. They hadn't gotten along at times, especially when they first started out as roommates, but nonetheless she was his friend. And now she was gone. Torn apart like some pig in a meat plant. But he couldn't sit there and mourn while the world was crashing down around him. His friend wouldn't have wanted that. So, despite the crashing weight of loss flowing through him, he rose up from his position on the grassy ground and continued onward to try and find the rest of his group. Chaos was still surrounding him as he desperately tried to move away from Salunes dead body. It had appeared to him that his attempt to continue moving within the circus was growing more and more futile despite his strong shoves and dodging from everyone and everything around him. He couldn't see anything past the falling and fleeing bodies around him, and he was beginning to worry that he

was about to become a victim himself if he didn't escape himself. He truly didn't want to leave any of his companions behind, especially after seeing the dead body of his closest friend, but he knew that he would be of no use to them if he died. He needed to escape and pray that he would find them some other way. The clown was about to do just that until he heard a small cry not far from where he stood. He could tell it was a child's cry, smelling their fear and knowing the cries of children all too well, but something about this despair made him stop his movements and freeze on the spot.

Moving as quickly as he could to where the cry had come from, he noticed two motionless bodies laying before a small child. Tears flowed down her sweet face and her pink colored shirt was covered in blood. She was not injured in the slightest, except for a small scratch on her right cheek, but her parents were absolutely ripped to shreds. She had kneeled down and began to shake them in hopes that they would get up and begin to run alongside her once again. But they were dead. Gone from this world and moving to wherever was next for the human soul. Smiles clenched his jaw and pushed his way through to the young child and her dead parents. He quickly kneeled down to gaze into her tear filled hazel eyes, yelling to her that she had to go without them. That they were never going to get back again. She had shaken her head and cried that she was not going to leave them, oblivious to the people running and falling around her. Bowing his head and letting out a low growl that he was sure the girl could not hear, he reached over the two bodies and grabbed the small child by her sides, hoisting her up so that he was securely holding her in his long arms. She cried and struggled as he ran as fast as he could through the crowd, whimpering and clutching his shoulders as more people were torn and eaten by those demons that had come in the night. He tried to comfort her as best as he could, but he also had to focus on getting them the hell out of there.

They had made it into the woods after many long minutes of pushing through the living and the dead. But nonetheless they had made it out of the circus generally unscathed. Mr. Smiles had a few cuts that had ripped through his uniform when some of those monsters had tried to grab at him and the girl, but all that mattered to him was that the girl was safe. He didn't understand why he had felt such a need to save her; he normally would have left her to die just like her

parents. But he just couldn't. He had lost his dear friends that night and could connect with this child in that way. He didn't want to see her being torn to shreds and eaten alive. He had seen enough of that on that night. So now here they were, huddled together for warmth in front of a burning car that the clown had set ablaze, the older of the two trying desperately to stay awake so he can protect this child.

There was a sudden screech in the distance behind them in the woods, bringing Smiles right out of his thoughts the very instant he heard it, and made the clown tense and instinctively reach for the rifle at his side. It was an all too familiar sound that constantly brought him back to the very first night of this pandemic. He now knew that those creatures were simply infected humans; not entirely dead...not entirely alive. Over the past three months of their traveling to safety, Mr. Smiles grew to know how exactly he could kill the infected without dying himself. He had found the rifle a few weeks after his first witnessed attack. An older man had been carrying it and almost shot both the clown and the girl out of sheer terror. But, being the monster that he was, Smiles had torn out the man's throat with his bare hands before the human could even flinch. He didn't want to have to do it in front of the kid, but if he hadn't they would've both been dead. It had taken him a few days after discovering the weapon to learn how to use it. But he eventually began to understand how it worked. After having to use it on a few infected he was pretty sure he got a hang of it. He was a fast learner. One of his few redeeming qualities. It was also extreme motivation to protect his new companion from these monsters as best as he could. He hated the thought of her dying in such a way. He is never going to let such a thing happen to her.

Coming to the conclusion that the infected was far enough away to not be a problem, the clown relaxed as best as he could and looked back at the flames before him. It was almost mesmerizing as he listened to the roar and crackle of the fire. But it was also a bit worrisome. Now that he knew that there were infected in the area around them, although they may be far off, he was worried that they would be drawn to the light and the sound. He needed to be on high alert. No more dozing off on his part.

The young girl in his arms let out another whimper, making Smiles

look down at her with his bright blue eyes. "It's okay, Autumn. I promise you that everything is okay. Nothing is going to hurt you as long as I'm here to protect you."

But he couldn't protect her from her dreams. He was certain that she had nightmares almost every night after what had happened that fateful night. They have also seen many horrors on their way to this very moment-horrors that even made the demon clown shiver at the thought of them-and there was no doubt in his mind that Autumn was traumatized by the whole event. Humans have turned into monsters that had no limits in their killing and need for the flesh of others. They killed without remorse or even the slightest bit of emotion. Although Smiles and the rest of his kind did about the same when it came to finding children to feast on they knew when they had to stop. They knew that once they had reached a certain point, especially at the circus in which the clown was from, they needed to take a break from taking anymore children. People would become suspicious and cause nothing but trouble for the interdimensional beings. But none of that mattered anymore. He could eat all he wanted and no one would bat an eye. They were more concerned about the infected roaming the Earth than a killer clown attacking them when they least expect. And of course Smiles had to eat to keep his energy up as much as he could. It was the only thing that was giving him enough strength to keep going. But, sadly enough, the young girl was almost always exhausted because of what they have gone through in this past month.

Another screech penetrated through the air. It made the clown growl and grab ahold of his gun once again. The unnatural yell was from what he had grown to call a runner. Once that infected spotted you in the darkness or the light of day-it would not rest until it chased you down and tear you apart. The two survivors had run into a few of these creatures on their long journey, and Mr. Smiles hated these ones the most. Autumn was so small for her age and couldn't keep up with him sometimes when he ran. The clown was very tall and lanky with his long legs and great stamina. He would have to pick her up and run with her in his arms to ensure their escape.

Once, when they were roaming through an abandoned house to search for some supplies and food for the kid, they had failed to

notice two runners standing in a room above them. Thinking that they were alone as they searched through the home as thoroughly as they could, the tall clown had accidentally slammed a cupboard shut in the kitchen in their search for food that would last through their travels. The first thing he heard was the bone chilling scream of the infected coming from one of the rooms on the second floor. He gasped and turned to look up the stairs, reaching down for his rifle so that he may shoot them down if they ran down the stairs. But he knew that in that tight space it would be nearly futile to do so. All he could think of doing was grabbing the young girl and running out of the home as fast as he could. And that is exactly what he did.

As fast as he could, the clown had ran into the room adjacent to him where the young girl was and grabbed her hand tightly, startling her and making her let out a small yelp. Smiles tensed at the sound and looked back toward the stairs, hearing two more screeches and the sound of heavy footsteps bounding toward the polished wooden stairs. He tugged Autumn in the direction of the front door and peered back behind them. Two runners, both frothing at the mouth like some sort of rabid animal, ran from a room and were now chasing them from down the stairs. Their snarls and yells sent a shiver down the clowns back as he barged out the front door, Autumn being pulled behind him by his large gloved hand. He could hear them closing in on them. They were getting closer and closer to the two companions as Smiles struggled to keep the girl close to him as they ran. But her tiny legs couldn't keep up with his long strides. She began to lose grip on his hand, crying out as she desperately tried to keep a hold of him. Mr. Smiles took two glances at her before slowing just a bit to quickly pick her up. With her safely in his arms, the young girl wrapping her arms around his neck to hold onto him, he began to run as fast as his legs would take him. Branches from low hanging trees scratched at his painted white face, making him grit his teeth at the stinging pain that took over his senses. But he had to keep going. He couldn't stop for a single second with those creatures chasing them down. Leaping over a fallen tree and landing with a grunt onto the dirt covered floor below, he heard one of the infected fumble and fall to the ground. With one momentarily down the clown felt his arms untense just for a fraction of a second. He knew that if they fell it was very hard for them to get back up with all their twitching movements. Taking one glance back and noticing that he

had a big enough distance between himself and the runner still chasing him down, he let out a heavy breath and turned sharply to the right. They had one chance of getting out of this alive: lose them and hide.

There was denser shrubbery in that part of the woods, making it hard for even the clown to see through the green plants. But he didn't care. Just as long as they lost the infected and were safe once again. His breathing had become labored and his arms and legs began to ache. Smiles bowed his head and closed his eyes tightly as he tried to focus on his breathing and concentrate on the task at hand. Yes, he was exhausted from both the run and lack of food, but the most important thing to him at that very moment was getting Autumn to safety. Opening his eyes just in time to veer to the left of a tree he had almost burrowed into, he scanned the area around him, trying to spot anything that they could hide in. The infected was still chasing them despite the lack of visibility in such a place, but it seemed to be struggling to get through as well. Yellow eyes roamed over the area around them in desperation until he finally spotted a place for them to hide. It was a large bush that, sadly, would hurt to sit in, but it was the only place he could think of at that very moment. Sprinting as fast as his aching legs would take him, he turned quickly to the right and threw the young girl into the bush first. There was a silent cry from the girl the second she landed in it, possibly being cut from the sharp branches within it, but she otherwise remained quiet. She knew the severity of the situation and had been taught early in the epidemic by the clown that to ensure survival was learning how to be silent.

Something Smiles clearly needed to learn after slamming that cupboard door like he had.

Carefully getting into the bush himself, he grabbed the young girl and held her close to him, stroking her hair and shushing her gently to try and comfort her all he could. The infected that had been able to keep up with them stopped mere feet from where they sat and seemed to be sniffing the air like a wolf searching for its prey. Autumn had buried her face into his broad chest and let out a small whimper. He could feel her shaking in his long arms and let out a shaky sigh himself. Remembering what had happened to Chuckles a

month prior to this event and what had happened to those humans at his circus, he deeply believed that if he tried to fight this thing off with his bare hands he would be torn apart, leaving the young girl to fend for herself. Pressing his mouth on the top of her head and closing his eyes, Smiles listened intently as the runner stalked around the area to try and find them. He could hear it moving closer to where they had been hiding, and he was certain this would be their end, but a sudden bang off in the distance made his eyes shoot open and the infected stop in its tracks. Another noise similar to the first was followed by a loud, ear piercing scream of terror and pain. The demon clown was able to make it out as a woman's scream; a scream he had not heard for quite awhile ever since that fateful night. Autumn looked up at him as his breathing grew rapid and ragged as he kept his eyes on the infected before him. As another scream echoed through the woods, the runner let out an inhuman yell as it turned to run in the direction of the scream. A sigh of relief had flowed out of the clowns nose as he pulled the girl closer to him. They had stayed like that for awhile, not wanting to leave the safety of the bush until they knew for certain that they were going to be alright.

That was the closest to death that they have been sense they had left the circus.

He was never going to let such a thing happen again.

Sighing heavily out of his mouth, Smiles looked away from the flames and back down at the young girl sleeping in his arms. Sleeping out in the open like this wasn't the greatest idea, but the kid really needed to get some sleep, and they had to get warm before they froze to death in the rain. His suit was absolutely soaked from walking and now sitting in the pouring rain for hours. He just wished that it would stop after so many days with the cold liquid falling from the dark sky. Before this nightmare started, Mr. Smiles was used to being able to always have a source of shelter when such weather occurred. But that sort of comfort was now gone and he had to get used to their circumstances. It wasn't good for him to think about his life before. But it was very hard not to after everything he has gone through with this child beside him. He just had to stay focused and alert as they travel. They needed to get to that quarantine zone he had heard

about from a victim of his about two weeks ago. They said it was constructed by orders of the government to keep civilians safe and create some sort of society amidst this chaotic world. When he heard about this place from that delicious man he had devoured, all he could think about was getting Autumn to this place and keeping her safe within its walls. Than maybe he could finally sleep...He desperately needed to have his long rest once they made it to the zone. The clown just wanted his companion to finally be in a place where she would no longer have to worry about the dangers in the outside world.

An even louder screech shook Smiles very core, making him take his rifle out when he realized that it was even closer than the ones before. They must be getting attracted to the roaring flames that were continuing to consume the abandoned car in front of them. He gripped his gun tightly and stared into the dark woods in search of anything that might indicate immediate danger to the girl and himself. Even though he didn't want to move to another resting place with the darkness surrounding them and the cold rain soaking into their skin, the clown didn't want them to be spotted by an infected either. With a heavy sigh and a low grumble, he gently shook Autumn's shoulders to wake her from her deep slumber. She let out a small groan and opened her tired eyes, looking up at him in confusion before turning to stare at the flames. She seemed to have forgotten where they were while she slept, but she began to remember as she moved closer to the tall clown for warmth.

"Is everything okay," the small girl whispered as she turned back to him to gaze into his piercing blue eyes. Mr. Smiles smiled softly at her and stroked her cheek with his torn white glove. He really didn't want to worry her after the long and grueling day they had before settling to rest, but he didn't really have a choice considering the circumstances.

He shook his head a little, his jet black hair bombing ever so slight as he did so, and began to run his hand through her auburn hair. "We have to start moving again. There seems to be some infected in the woods behind us."

He felt the girl tense in his arms as she turned just a little to stare fearfully into the forest. He murmured soothingly and kissed the top

of her head while he reached over to grab her small backpack. The clown didn't like how light it felt now that half of her food was gone. She's been trying to eat as less as she could, but Smiles always insisted that she eat more. He didn't want her energy to begin to run as low as his. Gently putting the bag straps to rest on her small shoulders, he began to stand up with a low grunt, knees protesting after sitting for many hours on the muddy ground below. Autumn stood up as well, standing beside him and grabbing ahold of his large hand. He rubbed the back of her hand with his thumb as they began to walk away from where they had camped for the night. The mud beneath their feet began to cover their shoes and made it a lot harder to trek through the woods. The young girl clutched onto him tighter to keep from sinking into the viscous muck under her small shoes. Smiles looked down at her feet and mumbled that he had to find her some new shoes when they were able to reach another town. But who knew how far they were to such a place. It has been weeks since their last encounter in that abandoned home. The town hadn't been very fruitful, and the home they had explored barely had any food left behind. They may have been able to stay a little while longer if it wasn't for the clown's little mistake. Sticks on the ground broke under their feet and the cool wind began to howl in the night. Fall was upon them. Autumn didn't have a jacket for this type of weather. All she had was a long sleeved shirt that Smiles had found for her in the luggage of a girl that was a little older than she and had been found within a car left at the side of a long road. He shivered at the thought of her and her family's fate. The shirt was rather large on her small body, but it was better than nothing until he was able to find something warmer for her to wear. It did worry him since the weather has become so cold. However, he was powerless against Mother Nature. He couldn't control what She inflicted on this planet.

Autumn looked up at him with her dark hazel eyes, making out the serious and intense look upon his pale face. "Where do you think we'll go?"

Mr. Smiles let out a heavy breath and closed his eyes for a moment. He truly didn't know where they would end up after having to leave their place in front of that car. With infected roaming the area he was more concerned for their well being as they trekked through the dark woods. One good thing within all of this was that he was able to see

in the dark very well with his keen sense of sight. He would be able to spot anything or anyone coming toward them despite the heavy darkness surrounding them. This is how he used to stalk his victims back before this nightmare began. The demon clown would stalk through the night when the lights began to dim within the circus he had once called home. Some parents-stupid humans they were-would leave their children unattended for some time while they conversed with the other adults around them. This made it so very easy for him and his companions to sneak and catch his victims. Once he had caught an unsuspecting boy who had wandered too far from his mother and father, moving into the dark tent where Smiles was lurking before the show they were about to perform began. The child walked around curiously, fumbling in the dark as he explored the large tent. Unbeknownst to him, the demon was eyeing him from a distance, seeing him clear as day and waiting for the right moment to pounce. He had tasted very well one Smiles caught him. The thought of that night made his stomach growl painfully. He really needed to find more food for the both of them.

They continued to walk in silence for a long period of time before another bone chilling screech echoed throughout the woods. Smiles gripped onto his rifle tighter and pulled the girl closer to him by her shoulders. Autumn crossed her arms in front of her chest in fear as they began to slow their movements. The infected sounded like it was straight ahead of them. It was far enough for the clown to not spot it, but it was close enough for them to hear its inhuman yells and twitching steps. It appeared to only be one, at least when it came to being near the two survivors, and the clown was confident that he would be able to sneak up on it and take it out. Other than his gun, he had a sharp hunting knife that rested on the hilt of his belt that he had taken from the exact same man he had gotten the gun from. Putting his gun away and taking out the knife, he slowed his movements even more as he scanned the area ahead of them. There was a tall figure mere feet in front of them that he could finally see. Even though it appeared to be a shadow in the dark, Smiles could see the twitching and clawing that indicated a runner lurking in these woods. Vering slowly and quietly to the right, he knelt down as he stopped beside a tree, grabbing both of Autumn's shoulders once he was eye level with her.

"I need you to stay here for a minute," he whispered lowly, seeing fear rise in her eyes as she gaped at him. "I'm not going to be long, kiddo. I just need you to stay here and be very quiet while I kill this thing, okay?"

Autumn nodded and bit her lower lip to keep from whimpering as he stood up and smiled down at her. He wasn't going to leave her for long. After he took this thing out he would come right back to her and take her through the woods until they find somewhere safe. Stepping out from behind the tree, he slowly began to creep toward the runner twitching and mumbling in front of him. Sometimes he wondered if there was any trace of humanity inside of them. A few nights after his first encounter with them, Smiles had heard about the fungus that had infected many humans once the spores were released from them. It had only affected bugs in the animal kingdom before it was somehow able to get to the human race. He had found a small pamphlet that was handed out in a small town they had first walked through. It had information about the infection and what to look for if someone was about to turn. It was a good thing to learn after the hell they have gone through previous to that moment, but ever since then the clown wondered if these humans may still be humans. Just sick. If there was ever going to be a cure in the near future, would they be able to turn back to who they were before? It seemed highly unlikely to him after the month they have had with these things. But it was good to keep hoping. It was one of the only things keeping him going. He just hoped that one day this would all end. And then this nightmare would be over.

Someday...

As he grew closer to the infected, he crouched down and began to stalk toward it. He was careful to not step on any branches that littered the floor, gripping the hilt of his knife tightly as a bit of anxiety flowed through him. He didn't want to startle it and start a chase that could cost his life. So he moved with every bit of caution that he had, eyes trained on the thing in front of him with his bright blue eyes turning into a furious yellow. He was becoming tired of running into these once human beasts. He just wanted a moment of peace as they continued on their journey to the safe haven that was rumored to have been built. But he had to stay focused and get rid of

this infected. There was no time for distractions and impossible thoughts. Growing ever closer to what you can consider to be his prey, he began to growl quietly as it yelled and squirmed like an insect on its back. The sight of it began a rising irritation within the tall clown. He hated these things with every fiber of his being. Even if they still had their human souls within them...Because these things-these infected humans-were nothing but mindless monsters now. All they did was tear into those poor unfortunate souls that they caught and eat them bit by bit. Yes, you could say that Smiles once did the same before all of this started. But, at the very least, he knew his limits. These creatures had none. They had no power over themselves and were ultimately controlled by the sickness inside of them.

He was even closer to it now. He could smell it's rotting flesh and the smell of blood that covered its clothing. The blood looked to be fairly fresh, meaning that it had gotten a hold of someone not too long before the two companions stumbled upon it. The question was: where was the body? Smiles didn't want Autumn to see such a horrific scene after so many bodies littering the streets and fields in and out of towns. People with their guts hanging out. People with their throats torn open and their arms ripped off. A child not much older than the young girl with her head blown off by the bullet of a shotgun. It had been a complete nightmare for the child and he was going to try his hardest to not let her see anymore. That's why when he found someone to feast upon during their travels, he would make sure that the girl was occupied with something else so she did not have to watch him do the deed. She was too innocent. Too pure. But for how long could he keep her that way? How long could he save her from such horrors as these months went by? He didn't know. But one thing was for sure: he wasn't going to let anything happen to this child as long as he lived. He would rather die protecting her than have her eaten by one of these infected beasts.

Just one more inch away from it...

One good stab to the neck and it will be gone...

Taking a deep breath in through his nose, he lunged and wrapped his arm around the infected's neck, pulling it to his large form while it squirmed and scratched at his arm. He gritted his teeth and lifted the knife in his right hand to be level with the thing's throat. He had to

hold it tightly in order to get it right where he needed to to take it out without injuring himself as well. One he was able to keep it as still as he could, with its breath coming out in heaving pants and his arm almost breaking its neck, he plunged his knife deeply into the throat of the beast with a satisfying break of flesh and bone. Twisting the knife and growling lowly in his throat, the clown watched it choke on the blood that was pouring into its mouth with mild satisfaction. As it died in his arms he let out a huff as he scanned the area around them. There appeared to be no more in his line of sight, but he could hear some screeching and yells coming from a distance. He needed to be on high alert trekking through these woods. Slowly pulling out his knife and dropping the limp body to the floor, he looked down at the blood that now covered his gloved hand. It was a disgusting sight considering where the blood had come from. It always delighted him to see the blood of his victims on his hands. But this was different. It came from something that could have killed him if he hadn't been so careful. Closing his eyes and standing there for a moment, he steadied his ragged breathing and let his heart rate slow before heading back to where he had left Autumn. She was still standing there when he reached her; hands beneath her armpits and her whole body shaking from either the cold air or fear. He smiled softly down at her and wiped the blood off of his glove the best he could on his suit before reaching down to pull her closer to him, embracing her and rubbing her back to try and warm her up.

"Did you kill it, Mr. S?"

Smiles nodded and stroked her hair soothingly. "It's dead now, kiddo. It can't hurt anyone anymore."

Autumn pressed her head to his chest and inhaled deeply, seeking comfort from the large clown before her. Smiles really didn't want to put her through this again, especially not at night. It was safer to move during the light of day when the infected were easier to spot. He just didn't want to take any chances after hearing so many yelling and screeching within these woods. They had to keep moving in order to find a better place to rest. Hopefully they would be able to find some sort of shack or house to stay in to keep out of the rain. But, sadly, it seemed highly unlikely to him due to them finding no sort of civilization for weeks. He bowed his head and let the water in

his hair and on his face drip off in small droplets. The child's hair was absolutely soaked as well, and the clown found himself wishing had a jacket to give to her once again. Sometimes he had doubts about himself when it came to taking care of her. He had never taken care of a child before. He's only eaten them and tortured them so that he could smell their delicious fear that always had him salivating. It was very foreign to him and he still couldn't understand what possessed him to take care of her. But now he was hip deep into this. He couldn't turn back now. Mumbling to himself and pulling her tightly to him, he kissed the top of her head, feeling the cool water soak his red covered lips. He was beginning to grow quite fond of her. Hence why he would protect her for as long as he could. He just hoped they would make it to that zone soon...Before he ran out of steam completely.

"We have to start moving again, sweetie," Smiles whispered reluctantly. "Hopefully we don't have to go far."

Autumn nodded and yawned a little, looking up at him with her tired eyes. "I hope so..."

And with that, they started their journey once again in search of a safer place to stay for the night. They walked up the path they had been walking on before Smiles had spotted that infected. When Autumn spotted the limp body, she tightened her hand in his as he slowly steered them away from it. The smell of it's rotting flesh made her cough and tense as it invaded her senses. Beyond the deceased runner and farther up into the woods, the smell of mud and rain filled the air. Smiles thought it was a pleasant smell after all the rot and decay they had experience in these past couple of days. It brought back some old memories of the days he used to have when him and his companions were setting up their circus. In rain or shine they would work until the tent was up and the stands were ready for service. It was a grueling job that took them many hours to complete. But, with their high stamina and strength, it sometimes didn't phase them. During the summer months the cool rains were very welcoming as it cooled down the dry, hot air that was beating down on them from the sun above. They used to stop for a few moments to just relish in the new set of temperature and relief. Smiles would tilt his head back and close his eyes so that the water could wash over

his face. He had loved it than. He has grown to hate it now. It was cold and hard to move in. Working at the circus and traveling on foot from place to place were both extremely different scenarios. All he wished for was for this to all end as soon as possible. Find a warm place for Autumn and himself and have walls around them to keep them away from the infected as best as it could.

Wishful thinking, Mr. Smiles...

He frowned at this unwelcome thought and bowed his head, yellow eyes glaring straight ahead of them as he tried to keep his mind on other things beside the past. The past is the past; you can't go back and change it once it's over. However, despite his attempts to keep them away, the thoughts would always come crawling back in his dark mind. He had heard many years ago about the psychosomatic trauma that can occur after a very horrific event when it came to the weak minded humans of this planet. But he never thought that he would ever experience such grief-such terror-in his everlasting life. He was the one that was meant to terrorize those around him that he wished to feed upon. He was the one who was supposed to be feared. That all changed in the blink of an eye that fateful night.

Everything has changed.

And it was never likely to be the same ever again.

But maybe-just maybe-there was hope for the child to live a much calmer life within the walls of the zone.

Here's to hoping, ol' fella...

It has been so long sense I've published anything on this site. But I felt like I should at least give it a go again. Kind of missed it to be honest. This story took me awhile to create and many reworkings. I feel very compasionate toward it and will truthfully be continuing it as much as I possibly can until it is finished. Can't wait to start writing again :)

(My inspiration for Mr. Smiles actually comes from an artist who created him. Their name is Claire Johnson on Tumblr and the second I saw her drawing of him I instantly fell in love. I just

want to give her credit for this amazing character and am hoping that I'm going to do a good job portraying him in my story. If you want I would definitely recommend seeing the drawings of him for yourself.)